



JAN 31 2006

DIRECTOR'S MEMORANDUM #06-06

FOR: ALL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE STAFF

FROM: 
GORDON J. BURKE, JR.
Director, Operations and Programs

SUBJECT: National Expert Cluster Workgroups

I. Purpose: To broadly define the responsibilities, standardize the nomination and selection process, and establish a rotation schedule for membership on the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP)/Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Expert Cluster (DLEC), the Competitive Grants Expert Cluster (CGEC) and the Administrative Support Expert Cluster (ASEC).

II. Background: The DLEC was established in 1996 to provide assistance on national objectives related to the DVOP and LVER programs by developing work products, drafting proposed guidance, reviewing annual funding requests and completing planned and ad hoc assignments relative to the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) mission. The CGEC was established in 2005 to provide similar assistance in support of competitive grants, such as the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program and Veterans Workforce Investment Program. The ASEC, formerly known as the Veterans' Program Assistant Standard Operation Procedure Committee, was formed in 2002 to standardize administrative functions across the regions to the greatest extent possible. Each of the three workgroups used different methods to solicit and select members, had different regional representation roles, and different reporting chains.

The Expert Cluster Workgroups support the National Office by providing input on recommended policies and directives and offering alternative positions for consideration. Members work independently, in small teams, or as a whole unit as required by the scope of the assignment. Service on all of the workgroups is intended to be a capacity-building experience for staff and provide staff with insight into a specific area of the VETS mission.

III. Size and Configuration of the Workgroups: Upon signing of this Director's Memorandum, each of the three Expert Clusters will consist of a minimum of six primary members, each representing one of the VETS' six regions. Each workgroup will have a Lead member selected from the six primary members. The Lead will fulfill administrative responsibilities such as tracking activities, scheduling conference calls, compiling meeting and conference call agendas and notes, etc. The Lead can be selected from any region and if possible will have served at least one year as a member of the workgroup.

Numbers of members will vary over the next year until equilibrium is established for each workgroup and the workgroup drafts a recommendation regarding the optimum number of members. Members will serve for a period of two years, with three members rotating off each year so that each new team consists of a mix of new and continuing members.

Beginning in Calendar Year (CY) 2006 workgroup members for the Atlanta, Chicago, and Philadelphia regions will be replaced in even numbered years. Workgroup members from the Boston, Dallas and San Francisco regions will be replaced in odd numbered years. The DLEC will begin following the rotation schedule in CY 2006. The CGEC and ASEC will begin following the rotation schedule in CY 2007. A potential result of putting all the workgroups on the same rotational schedule is that members currently on the CGEC and/or ASEC could inadvertently have to serve for three years. However, this should be resolved by CY 2008.

Region	CY 2006	CY 2007	CY 2008
Atlanta	New member	Continuing	New Member
Boston	Continuing	New Member	Continuing
Chicago	New Member	Continuing	New Member
Dallas	Continuing	New Member	Continuing
Philadelphia	New Member	Continuing	New Member
San Francisco	Continuing	New Member	Continuing

The Director of Operations and Programs will assign a National Office asset to be the Workgroup Coordinator with functional supervisory responsibilities for the Expert Cluster members.

IV. Workgroup Member Responsibilities: The National Expert Clusters will provide assistance to the Lead Center and National Office to complete special work assignments, draft policy directives, analyze data, review grant applications and provide reports as needed. Most of each team's work will be accomplished via email and telephone. Teams will travel to central locations to complete special projects as deemed necessary by the National Office and as funding permits.

Workgroup members, including Leads, are expected to devote up to 20% of their work time, or one 8 hour day per week, to assigned projects. It is the responsibility of the Expert Cluster member to advise the Workgroup Coordinator if and/or when the member devotes more than 8 hours per week to these responsibilities. Otherwise, the Workgroup Coordinator and respective (RAVET) will consider the member is working within these established guidelines.

Membership provides an excellent opportunity for Agency staff to expand their skills and experiences while enhancing their potential for career advancement. At a minimum, each Expert Cluster member will participate in the:

- A. **Development of an Annual Performance Plan (APP):** Early in the first CY quarter, each Expert Cluster will develop a list of recommended work items. Upon approval by the National Office, this list will be compiled to include the benchmarks, milestones and associated timelines to complete each item. When funding permits, this will be accomplished by traveling to a central location for a planning meeting early in the first CY quarter. The APP will serve as the principle guide for workgroup travel and activities throughout the year.

Each Expert Cluster will develop a method of tracking activities and coordinating information and work flow to complete APP tasks. The respective Lead will periodically update the tracking mechanism and forward it via email to all team members, the Workgroup Coordinator, and the Chief of the Division of Employment and Training Programs.

- B. **Completing Ad Hoc Assignments:** Expert Cluster members may be called upon throughout the year to volunteer for and complete *ad hoc* assignments. These requests will be made only when necessary and in response to unscheduled tasks identified by the National Office that are urgent and require rapid response. (RAVETs) will be advised of *ad hoc* taskings. In addition, *ad hoc* taskings will be added to the Annual Performance Plan for tracking purposes and to the greatest extent possible, will not exceed the 20% guideline.
- C. **Participating in Conference Calls:** Expert Clusters will be authorized to conduct recurring conference calls on a schedule established by each workgroup. The Lead or Workgroup Coordinator will schedule the calls, prepare an agenda and send a reminder to appropriate individuals 7 – 10 days prior to each conference call.
- D. **Participating in Subject Matter Expert (SME) Conference Calls:** Expert Clusters may develop topics of interest for discussion and identify points of contact for up to five SME conference calls per calendar year, based on team member recommendations. The Lead or Workgroup Coordinator will invite appropriate speakers or SMEs to discuss the topic. Representatives of the National Veterans' Training Institute, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, VETS Staff and other interested parties can be contacted to participate in these calls and/or be the SME.

V. Performance Appraisals: A performance element will be added to the performance plan for each member of the Expert Clusters. The Workgroup Coordinator will provide each member with a midyear review and the team member's supervisor with an assessment of their performance on the workgroup by September 30th of each year.

VI. Self-Nomination and Selection Process: VETS field staff who are interested in serving as an Expert Cluster member should submit a self-nomination to their RAVET, through their immediate supervisor. Self-nominations can be submitted via email or fax. Workgroup members who wish to continue serving on their team need only to notify their supervisor and RAVET who will in turn notify the Workgroup Coordinator.

Self-nominations can be made in any format, but to the greatest extent possible will address the applicant's knowledge and experience, or interest in becoming knowledgeable, in the workgroup's area of expertise. Members should have strong analytical and writing skills, be able to communicate effectively, and have an interest in the developmental processes involved in VETS' programs. Applicants are encouraged to use the Self-Nomination Resume Format provided in Attachment 1.

Self-nominations will be reviewed by the Workgroup Coordinator and Chief of the Employment and Training Programs Division who will forward recommendations for selection to the Director of Operations and Programs. The Director will make the final selections. The Chief of the Employment and Training Programs Division will notify the Workgroup Coordinator, the RAVET, and the selected employee. New team members will be introduced by departing team members on the first conference call conducted each calendar year.

If there are no self-nominations from a particular region, the RAVET may assign individuals with the concurrence of the Director of Operations and Programs.

VII. Actions Required:

- A. Beginning with the issuance of this memorandum, RAVETs in Atlanta, Chicago and Philadelphia Regions will notify all field staff within their area of responsibility of vacancies on the DLEC. For succeeding years, RAVETs will notify all field staff within their area of responsibility of vacancies on the Expert Clusters as per the rotational schedule included in this memorandum.
- B. Field Staff will submit self nominations to their supervisors.
- C. Supervisors will include comments/recommendations and forward the self-nomination to the RAVET prior to the due date set by the RAVET.

- D. The RAVET will provide comments and submit all comments/recommendations received from the supervisor(s) and self-nomination(s) to the Chief of the Division of Employment and Training Programs by December 31st, 2005 or two weeks after the issuance of this memorandum. Final selections will be made within two weeks after receipt of all nominations.
- E. Beginning in November of each year thereafter, the assigned Workgroup Coordinator(s) will notify the affected RAVETs to begin recruitment for Expert Cluster vacancies. Whenever a replacement is needed, RAVETs will notify all field staff within their area of responsibility and request self-nominations be submitted through the employee's supervisor by a given date.
- F. Supervisors will include comments/recommendations and forward the self-nomination to the RAVET prior to the due date.
- G. The RAVET will provide comments and submit all comments/recommendations received from the supervisor(s) and self-nomination(s) to the Chief of the Division of Employment and Training Programs by early December of each year.
- H. The Workgroup Coordinator and Chief of the Division of Employment and Training Programs will review the self-nominations and make recommendations to the Director of Operations and Programs who will make the final selections by the end of December.

NOTE: When vacancies occur out of cycle, they will be announced and filled out of cycle. The affected RAVET should request nominations and process them in an expeditious manner to allow the workgroup to continue with minimal interruption.

VIII. Inquiries: Questions regarding the procedures set forth in this memorandum should be directed to Pamela Langley at (202) 693-4708 or by email at langley.pamela@dol.gov.

IX. Expiration Date: When superseded or rescinded.

Attachments:

Self-Nomination Resume Format

Self-Nomination Resume Format

Name:

Current position with VETS:

Number of years with VETS:

National Office Expert Cluster Applying For: ☐DLEC ☐CGEC ☐ASEC

Experience that provided you with skills and knowledge that will help you be effective in working on this expert cluster:

What is/has been your level of involvement in the programs affected by this workgroup?

What special skills, knowledge, experience or interest do you have in the following:

- ☐ Grant development and processing (SGA, applications, awards, modifications, etc.)
- ☐ Computer knowledge and skills (Excel, Access, word processing, web sites, etc)
- ☐ Program and data analysis
- ☐ Writing operational procedures and policy guidance
- ☐ Program design and implementation
- ☐ Employment and training delivery systems
- ☐ Other

Why do you want to be a member of this workgroup?

Why do you believe you would be an asset to the team?

Provide any other comments that you would like to be considered: